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ABSTRACT

Air traffic controllers no longer able to perform their highly specialized duties must be removed in the interest of aviation safety. Because few employment opportunities exist outside the government for controllers' skills, Congress established a second-career training program in 1972 for controllers so removed by the Federal Aviation Administration. Few air traffic controllers eligible for this training program have used it to train and enter second careers. Instead, they have used other federal programs providing long-term income and training benefits. These and other measures available to the Administration can effectively protect the economic livelihood of controllers. Congress should discontinue the Second-Career Program. (Author/CSS)

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ED167729

BY THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL

Report To The Congress

OF THE UNITED STATES

Second-Career Training For Air Traffic Controllers Should Be Discontinued

Air traffic controllers no longer able to perform their highly specialized duties must be removed in the interest of aviation safety. Because few employment opportunities exist outside the Government for controllers' skills, the Congress established a second-career training program in 1972 for controllers so removed by the Federal Aviation Administration.

Few air traffic controllers eligible for this training program have used it to train and enter second careers. Instead, they have used other Federal programs providing long-term income and training benefits. These and other measures available to the Administration can effectively protect the economic livelihood of controllers. The Congress should discontinue the Second Career Program.

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CED-78-131
JUNE 29, 1978

COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

B-164497(1)

To the President of the Senate and the
Speaker of the House of Representatives

This is our report on the need to discontinue the second-career training program for air traffic controllers. Established in 1972, this program has not been effective in training and finding training-related employment in new (second) careers for controllers removed from duty. The report discusses the reasons the program has not been effective and recommends that it be discontinued because these same reasons bar the program from becoming effective.

We made our review pursuant to the Budget and Accounting Act of 1921 (31 U.S.C. 53) and the Accounting and Auditing Act of 1950 (31 U.S.C. 67).

Copies of this report are being sent to the Director, Office of Management and Budget, and to the Secretary of Transportation.

ACTING Comptroller General
of the United States

COMPTROLLER GENERAL'S
REPORT TO THE CONGRESS

SECOND-CAREER TRAINING FOR AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLERS SHOULD BE DISCONTINUED

D I G E S T

GAO recommends that the Congress discontinue the Second Career Program established to help air traffic controllers begin a new career once they are removed from duty. The basis of the recommendation is as follows.

The Federal Aviation Administration employs over 18,000 air traffic controllers to provide proper direction to and separation of inflight aircraft. In the interest of aviation safety, controllers must meet specific health and performance standards or be removed from duty.

Limited opportunities exist outside the Government for the specialized knowledge and experience of controllers. To help those who are so removed find other employment, the Congress established the Second Career Program in 1972. This authorized the agency to provide air traffic controllers with up to 2 years of training for a new career.

However, few controllers have used the program to enter second careers. About 50 percent of the 2,580 controllers eligible to participate since 1972 either declined or withdrew from training. GAO estimated that, in three agency regions that had one-half of all controllers eligible for the program,

--only 7 percent of 1,323 eligible controllers had or would use the program to begin second careers and

--program costs averaged $370,000 for each successful program participant. (See p. 4.)

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Three factors contributing to the program's limited use follow.

--About 98 percent of the controllers removed from duty had mental and physical impairments; many were the victims of advancing age. (See p. 5.)

--Most of those removed chose to use income security and training benefits available under other Federal programs, such as Federal workers' disability compensation or disability retirement, rather than begin a second career. (See p. 6.)

--Controllers were not adequately counseled by the agency, and no appreciable effort was made to find employment within the Federal Government. (See p. 8.)

The Federal Aviation Administration could improve program administration, but these improvements are unlikely to noticeably increase the program's success. Controllers' health and age and preferences for the long-term income security and training benefits available from other Federal programs provide formidable obstacles to increasing the program's effectiveness.

Most controllers' needs can be met by the income security and training benefits available from other Federal programs.

Only a few controllers--the 2 percent removed for loss of proficiency--would be ineligible for these benefits but would be ideally suited for reassignment to other positions within the Federal Government. (See p. 13.) Through 1977, the program has cost about $78.5 million to operate.

The Department of Transportation generally agreed with the criticisms of the administration of the program and the finding that few controllers have used the program to enter second careers related to training they received. (See p. 14.)

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ABBREVIATIONS

CSC	Civil Service Commission
FAA	Federal Aviation Administration
FSS	Flight Service Station
GAO	General Accounting Office
OWCP	Office of Workers' Compensation Program

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The Department of Transportation's Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) promotes aviation safety and operates a safe and efficient air traffic control system. It employs air traffic controllers (about 18,000 as of September 30, 1977) who monitor aircraft flight through radar and radio communications at some 400 airport control towers and 25 air route traffic control centers.

Controllers, whose work is highly specialized, are almost exclusively employed by the Federal Government. They train in meteorology, air navigation, standard communication procedures, types and uses of air navigation aids, and Federal Aviation Regulations. They must meet specific physical health standards, and, before controlling air traffic without direct supervision, they must be checked out for the work at the tower or center to which assigned. Failure to meet these standards can result in removal from air traffic control work.

SECOND-CAREER TRAINING

To compensate for these career hazards, the Congress passed Public Law 92-297 (5 U.S.C. 3381) in May 1972 to provide training for a second career for controllers removed from air traffic control duty for

--medical reasons that could adversely affect controller performance,

--loss of technical proficiency, or

--the preservation of the controllers' physical or mental health.

Air traffic controllers who serve for at least 5 years of service and are terminated for the above reasons are eligible for up to 24 months' training for another job. When a controller completes this training, the Department of Transportation may

--assign him to other duties in the Department,

--release him for transfer to another Federal agency, or

--separate him from service.

PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

FAA has issued general policy guidelines for administering the Second Career Program to its regional offices but allows them wide latitude in day-to-day program functions. Generally the controller selects the career field and then enters into an agreement with FAA concerning the

--training objective;

--counseling toward that objective;

--length of training allowed;

--course of study;

--course hours or work hours for on-the-job training;

--time reports;

--training progress reports;

--payments to training institution, if applicable, and

--other special conditions as appropriate.

A controller who elects second-career training usually must enter the training program within 60 days after permanent removal from duty and must complete it within a 3-year period. The participant must maintain satisfactory progress throughout training, periodically submit progress reports to FAA, and obtain FAA approval to deviate from the training program.

Public Law 92-297 required the Secretary of Transportation to report to the Congress on the operation of the Second Career Program not later than 5 years after the law's enactment. The report was to include a statement on the legislation's effectiveness in meeting the second-career needs of air traffic controllers and any recommendations considered necessary for the program's sound management.

In his October 31, 1977, report to the Congress, the Secretary concluded that the intent of the training program was valid and proper. He did not comment on the program's effectiveness but did recommend two changes. One proposal would exclude from second-career training controllers eligible for retirement (see p. 6); the other would prohibit

controllers reinstated to active duty from repeating second-career training.

From May 1972 to June 30, 1977, about 1,900 controllers entered the Second Career Program. Through fiscal year 1977 the program cost about $76 million, cumulatively, for training costs and controller salaries. We estimate that FAA spent about $500,000 annually to administer the program.

SCOPE OF REVIEW

We reviewed legislation and FAA policies, procedures, reports, and records relating to the Second Career Program. We obtained information on (1) Federal income security and training programs provided by the Department of Labor's Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP) and by the Civil Service Commission (CSC) and (2) rehabilitation programs operated by State agencies. We reviewed training, medical, and other records for a sample of controllers receiving second-career training and obtained information on their participation in other Federal income and training programs. (See app. I for sampling method.) We interviewed officials from FAA, the Department of Labor, CSC, and State worker rehabilitation agencies and controllers participating in the Second Career Program. We did not evaluate the propriety of the medical reason(s) for a controller's removal from air traffic control duty.

We made our review at FAA headquarters, Washington, D.C.; FAA's Southern, Eastern, and Western regional offices 1/ in Atlanta, New York City, and Los Angeles, respectively; OWCP offices in Jacksonville, New York City, and Washington, D.C.; CSC headquarters in Washington, D.C.; and State rehabilitation agencies in Georgia, New York, and New Jersey.

We selected FAA's Southern Region for review because it had the most program participants and a lower-than-average training completion rate, the Eastern Region because it had a large number of participants and an average training completion rate, and the Western Region because it had a large number of participants and a higher-than-average training completion rate. Our review in the Western Region, however, was not as extensive as the reviews in the other two regions and was limited to determining the employment status of participants completing training.

1/ The Southern and Eastern regions include all eastern States south of the Ohio River and east of the Mississippi River and the Ohio and Pennsylvania border except for the six New England States. The Western region includes the States of Arizona, California and Nevada.

CHAPTER 2

LIMITED USE AND SUCCESS OF THE SECOND CAREER PROGRAM

About 50 percent of controllers eligible for the Second Career Program have declined training. Our analysis in three FAA regions that had one-half of all controllers eligible for the Second Career Program showed that only 7 percent of the controllers had completed training and obtained employment in new careers for which they trained. Program costs to achieve this success were high. The limited use and success of the program can be attributed to controllers' health and ages, the availability of other Federal income security and training programs offering long-term benefits to controllers, and inadequacies in FAA program administration.

LIMITED USE

From May 1972 to June 30, 1977, 682 (26 percent) of 2,580 eligible controllers declined second-career training and 594 controllers that had entered training withdrew from it. In total, 1,276 of the 2,580 controllers eligible for second-career training, or 49 percent, did not fully use the program. (Details for each region are shown in app. II.)

LIMITED SUCCESS AND PROGRAM COST

According to our analysis in the Southern, Eastern, and Western Regions, we estimated that 22 percent (56 of 251) of the second-career participants who had completed training on June 30, 1977, were employed in the career for which they trained. Two years earlier, FAA had found, from a questionnaire sent to 825 program participants throughout the country, that, of 246 respondents, only 20 percent were employed in a career for which they trained.

On the basis of our analysis in the 3 regions, we estimated that only 7 percent (90 of 1,323) of controllers eligible for second-career training had used or would use the program to enter a new career. The remaining 93 percent had declined or had withdrawn from training or were not expected to find employment after training.

Our analysis in the three FAA regions was not valid for estimating the nationwide percentage of controllers expected to use the program to find new employment. But we believe the results reasonably represent the program's overall effectiveness because the three regions had over one-half of the controllers eligible for Second Career Program training.

On the basis of our tests in the Southern and Eastern Regions, we estimated that $21 million (84 percent) of about $26 million in program costs at June 30, 1977, was spent on controllers not able or not expected (for those still in training) to find employment in the careers for which they trained. Expressed another way, an average of $370,000 (1/) was spent for each participant employed or expected to be employed in careers for which they trained.

EMPLOYABILITY LIMITED BY HEALTH AND AGE

Poor health or age can greatly limit and, together, virtually block an individual's ability to start a new career. About 98 percent of controllers eligible for second-career training were removed from duty for poor health; 38 percent of those removed were over age 50.

Many controllers failed to use the Second Career Program or to obtain employment in second careers because of their health. In our sample in the Southern and Eastern Regions, 44 percent of the controllers who withdrew from training cited health as a reason; another 7 percent died while in training. About one-third of the controllers who had completed training and were unemployed at the time we contacted them said their health was the reason for their unemployment.

Also FAA data showed that over 50 percent of the controllers entering second-career training had psychiatric/psychological disorders, an impairment which could affect their performance in almost any job.

Impairment	Number of controllers	Percent of total
Psychiatric/psychological	1,063	52.8
Cardiovascular	330	16.4
Defective hearing	151	7.5
Gastrointestinal	150	7.5
Other	319	15.8
Total	2,013	100.0

About 59 percent of those controllers in our sample that had withdrawn from training and were receiving Federal workers' disability compensation (see app. III) were determined by OWCP to have no rehabilitative potential.

1/Represents total program costs in the Southern and Eastern Regions for salaries and training, about $26 million, divided by 70, which represents the projected employment in second careers for controllers which had completed or were still in training in the two regions. (See app. I.)

According to FAA statistics, about 75 percent of the controllers eligible for second-career training were aged 40 or older at the time they were removed from air traffic control duty; about 38 percent were over age 50. Most of these controllers were removed from duty for medical reasons.

Many controllers, because of their ages and length of service, were eligible for early or optional retirement. (See app. III for a description of these programs.) In our sample of second-career participants in the Southern and Eastern Regions, 25 percent were eligible for early or optional retirement at the time of their removal; others became eligible after entering training. Nationally, FAA reported that 21 percent of the controllers eligible for second-career training through March 31, 1977, were eligible for early or optional retirement.

In January 1977 the Department of Transportation proposed legislation to exclude from second-career training controllers eligible for early or optional retirement. The Department favored this exclusion because (1) these controllers had vested retirement benefits which would continue for life, (2) second-career training benefits were not available to other Federal employees eligible for optional retirement, and (3) controllers already enjoyed a special benefit--early retirement--that was not generally available to other Federal employees. However, a bill had not been introduced at the time of our review.

AVAILABILITY OF OTHER FEDERAL BENEFITS

Almost all controllers removed from duty were eligible for income security and training benefits under other Federal programs generally available to Federal employees. Many controllers had chosen these programs over second-career training, others withdrew from training to accept these benefits, still others had applied for or were receiving these benefits after completing their second-career training. These programs include, in addition to early or optional retirement, disability retirement and workers' disability compensation. These programs provide long-term income security benefits, such as compensation and annuities; training for workers disabled by their job, and in some cases, special tax advantages. (A brief description of these programs is included in app. III.) Some controllers, because of their ages, length of service, and the nature of their disability, had the option to apply for benefits under any one of the four programs.

Controllers that were eligible but declined second-career training (see p. 4) usually left FAA on disability retirement. Later, some of these controllers qualified for and received workers' disability compensation. Also our analysis showed that, of 61 controllers in the Southern Region, 8 controllers, or about 13 percent, had withdrawn from training to take advantage of announced increases in Federal retirement benefits (cost-of-living increases) or because their claims for workers' disability compensation had been approved. Examples follow.

--A controller started second-career training for a general manager position in an insurance agency in November 1974. Several months earlier he had filed a claim for workers' disability compensation. On August 21, 1975, the controller's claim for workers' disability compensation was approved. The next day he withdrew from second-career training and was separated from FAA a few weeks later. The controller told FAA he was withdrawing for health reasons.

--Another controller removed from duty in June 1973 started training for a methods and standards analyst position in a bank the same month. The controller had applied for workers' disability compensation the previous month. In September 1974 his workers' disability compensation claim was approved. Two days later the controller advised FAA that he was withdrawing from training for health reasons.

Our analysis also showed that, of the 101 controllers in the Southern and Eastern Regions who had completed or withdrawn from second-career training, 82 were also receiving income benefits from other Federal programs, as had 5 others before their death, as follows:

	Number of controllers		
	Southern region	Eastern region	Total
Federal sources of post-training income:			
Disability retirement annuity	39	18	57
Disability compensation	17	11	28
Optional retirement annuity	0	2	2
Total	56	31	87
No record of Federal income benefits	5	9	14
Total	61	40	101

PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION DEFICIENCIES

FAA had not adequately administered the Second Career Program to assure its proper use and maximize program success because controllers were not properly counseled and no appreciable effort was made to find employment for controllers within FAA or other Federal agencies.

Counseling

State-operated worker rehabilitation programs use academically trained and experienced counselors to assist program participants. State programs also accept for rehabilitation only individuals capable and willing to undergo training, monitor the quality of training provided by training institutions, monitor participant's progress in training, and provide placement and postplacement counseling services. In contrast, FAA did not use academically trained or experienced counselors, and its counseling efforts and services were generally inferior.

State rehabilitation agencies require counselors to have extensive education and work experience. Employment qualification required by agencies in three States follow.

State	Counselor qualifications
New Jersey	30 undergraduate or graduate credits in vocational rehabilitation or a related field and 1 year's experience in vocational rehabilitation
New York	Master's degree in vocational rehabilitation, or 1 year of graduate credits and 2 years' work experience in vocational rehabilitation
Georgia	Master's degree in vocational rehabilitation or related field

Additionally, in some States such as Georgia, entry-level counselors work under close supervision and must have 2 years' experience to reach the next professional level where general supervision is provided.

Conversely, FAA counselors were required to have only a high school education and 3 years' general work experience. The educational backgrounds of the Second Career Program counselors in the Southern, Eastern, and Western Regions follow.

	Number of counselors	Education beyond high school	Area of emphasis
Southern	2	3 years' college	Business administration; journalism
		2 years' business school	Executive Secretarial
Eastern	2	Masters degree	Education
		None	-
Western	1	Associate of science degree	Electronics

The five counselors had no previous work experience in vocational or rehabilitation counseling and little formal training. Most had attended a 2-week counseling course FAA developed for them. They worked under the general supervision of the training branch chief. Also State rehabilitation agencies closely monitored the quality of training provided by the training institutions and the participants' progress in the training by visits to the training sites at least once each 4 weeks. The Second Career Program requires participants to furnish reports of their progress, but counselors in the three FAA regions did not consistently enforce the requirement and rarely made visits to the training sites.

The State agencies also helped clients find employment and provided postplacement counseling until they became adjusted to the new job. Second Career Program counselors, however, did not provide any placement or postplacement counseling services.

Because of age and poor health conditions of many controllers removed from duty, pretraining assessment of their medical fitness for training and a rehabilitation and/or training program tailored to their individual needs would seem to be a prerequisite to a successful training program. FAA, however, did not provide these services to controllers.

Before controllers enter second-career training, FAA briefs them on the availability of other Federal programs and allows them up to 60 days from the date of removal from duty to research training opportunities and to develop a training plan if they enter the Second Career Program. The controllers are also given vocational tests and provided with the test results to assist them in making a decision. In addition, counselors are available to consult with controllers and to to provide administrative support in getting them into training.

Counselors in the three FAA regions, however, did not advise controllers as to whether they should or should not enter the Second Career Program nor generally help them choose a career field or training institution.

Some examples in which improved pretraining counseling could have resulted in better use of the program and greater success in helping controllers into second careers follow.

--A controller, described by FAA's regional flight surgeon as a "latent catatonic schizophrenic," was removed from duty after being hospitalized for acute depression and suicidal tendencies. He entered and later withdrew from the Second Career Program because of recurrent depression and suicidal impulses.

--A 58-year-old controller removed from duty for progressive rheumatoid arthritis entered the Second Career Program to obtain an associate applied science degree in orchard management and horticulture. This controller told us he could have obtained a job in his career field on completing training but his arthritis prevented him from doing the heavy lifting and hard work associated with the job. FAA's regional flight surgeon said that the controller's second-career training objective was not compatible with his medical condition and that, because of the progressive

nature of the disease, he would eventually become crippled and, therefore, should have pursued training for a sedentary-type job.

--A 37-year-old controller completed Second Career Program training for a blacksmith job. Unemployed, he later applied for and received workers' disability compensation benefits. In awarding disability compensation to this controller, OWCP determined there were limited job opportunities for a blacksmith in the individual's area of residence.

--One controller initially chose prelaw study at an academic institution for his second-career training. After 5 months' study, FAA approved his transfer to on-the-job training to become a locksmith. Six months later, FAA approved his transfer to a technical school with the objective of becoming a scuba diver instructor.

Reassignments/reemployment

FAA's current policy excludes controllers eligible for the Second Career Program from being considered for reassignments to other duties within FAA. However, before the program was established, it was FAA's policy to consider reassigning controllers to other duties within FAA, such as Flight Service Station (FSS) specialist. FSS specialist positions offer the best potential for the reassignment of controllers because of the large number of vacancies occurring each year and the transferability of the controller's knowledge (see p. 1) to the duties of that position.

FSS specialists have the same CSC job classification as air traffic controllers, but their duties are not similar. FSS specialists provide flight assistance services primarily to general aviation pilots, including preflight and inflight weather information and flight plans. Unlike controllers, FSS specialists do not work in airport towers or air route traffic control centers controlling and separating air traffic.

The potential for filling FSS specialist vacancies with ex-controllers is shown by the employment of specialists in the Southern Region. Between July 1, 1975, and June 30, 1977, 174 FSS specialist positions were filled with 114 new employees and 60 controller trainees who had failed controller training. These positions represented about 45 percent of the 387 controllers entering second career-training in the same period.

Since March 1974 FSS specialists have been required to pass an annual medical examination. But this does not prevent the reassignment of controllers to these positions. FAA regional flight surgeons have authority to waive the medical requirements for FSS positions; in the Southern Region about one-third of the specialists had been granted medical waivers.

FAA officials told us that controllers were not reassigned to other positions in the agency because the practice lowered morale among career employees whose future promotions might be affected, and many controllers were unwilling to accept reassignments at reduced earnings and loss of disability retirement benefits.

In our report on "Civil Service Disability Retirement: Needed Improvements" (Nov. 19, 1976, FPCD-76-61), we reported that under CSC disability retirement, Federal employees were not obligated to accept reassignments and had several significant disincentives for not doing so, such as losing their basis for disability retirement and the life time annuities, tax advantages, and income earnings opportunities available in the private sector provided for under the disability retirement provisions. Because many Federal employees retiring on disability were able to do other Government work, we recommended that the Congress reevaluate the civil service disability retirement provisions and enact legislation that would encourage, instead of discourage, retention of potentially productive employees. We recommended also that any new legislation enacted should (1) require Federal agencies, except for compelling reasons, to reassign employees to vacant positions within the same occupational class when the applicant is able to do that job and (2) provide appropriate incentives, such as saved pay, for employees reassigned to lower graded positions.

Under the pay savings provisions of 5 U.S.C. 5337, Federal employees involuntarily reassigned to lower paying jobs can retain their current salary for 2 years. After the 2-year period, FAA has the authority to give controllers the highest possible salary for their new job which results in the least salary loss. Also, if the employee's disability is job related, Federal workers' disability compensation would be available to make up for most, but not all, of any loss in earnings.

Several controllers who had completed the Second Career Program in the Southern and Eastern regions said that they had specifically requested reassignments to other jobs in FAA. Other controllers told us that they would have been interested in reassignment, some with reservations, if given the opportunity.

In addition to FAA's policy against using reassignments, FAA did not use the Second Career Program to train and place controllers in other Federal jobs, although reemployment in Federal service was anticipated by FAA when the Second Career Program was authorized. Our review in the 3 FAA regions showed that of 958 controllers entering the program, only 6 had taken training specifically for another Federal job and only 1 of the 6 was actually reemployed in Federal service. In testifying before the House Committee on Post Office and Civil Service in June 1971 on the need for the Second Career Program, the Department of Transportation estimated that about 60 percent of those controllers to be trained under the program would be reemployed in other Federal agencies.

Although many controllers were limited by their health and ages in obtaining employment (see p. 5), these controllers could have benefited from a special Government-wide program for the handicapped administered by CSC, which has as one of its objectives the retention of disabled Federal employees in other Federal jobs.

CONCLUSIONS

FAA could improve its administration of the program, but such improvements are unlikely to noticeably increase the program's success. In our opinion, the health and ages of controllers and their preferences for the long-term income security and training benefits available from other Federal programs provide formidable obstacles to increasing the program's effectiveness. The program should be discontinued.

If the Second Career Program were discontinued, 98 percent of the controllers--those removed for medical reasons--could have their needs met by the income security and training benefits available from other Federal programs. The remaining 2 percent--those removed for a loss of technical proficiency--would be ideally suited for reemployment within the Federal Government, including reassignments to other duties within FAA, such as FSS specialists. (See p. 11.) FAA could and should assist all controllers to choose a course of action that is best suited to the needs of the controller, FAA, and the Federal Government.

RECOMMENDATION TO THE CONGRESS

We recommend that the Congress discontinue the Second Career Training Program for air traffic controllers by repealing section 3381 of title 5, United States Code.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION

We recommend that, concurrent with the discontinuance of the Second Career Program, the Secretary of Transportation direct the FAA Administrator to

--adopt and implement a policy to reassign, to the fullest extent possible, controllers removed from air traffic control duty to other duties within FAA and

--assist controllers to choose a course of action suited to the needs of the controller, FAA, and the Federal Government, considering their potential for reassignment within FAA or reemployment in another Federal agency and eligibility for benefits from other Federal programs.

AGENCY COMMENTS

In commenting on our proposed report, the Department of Transportation basically agreed with our criticisms of administration of the Second Career Program and the finding that few controllers have used the program to enter second careers related to training they received. The Department said it found the Second Career Program to be a particularly difficult one to administer, and its experience with the program generally agrees with the findings of our report.

SAMPLING METHODOLOGY

We randomly selected 152 controllers from a universe of 661 who had entered the Second Career Program in the Southern and Eastern Regions at December 11, 1976, to test for employment of controllers in their second-career field and to test for their early or optional retirement eligibility.

EMPLOYMENT IN SECOND-CAREER FIELD

The sample of controllers entering training yielded a subsample of 40 controllers who had completed training. To include results from a region that had a higher-than-average completion rate among controllers entering training and, potentially, a higher rate of employment in their second-career field, we then randomly selected 27 controllers who had completed training in the Western Region at June 30, 1977, from a universe of 90.

The sample results, which were obtained by interviewing those selected, were projected to the universe of those completing training in the three regions by June 30, 1977, 1/ or expected to complete training in the future for those still in training. The results of the sampling and the projection of controllers completing training follow.

1/We chose to project the results to a more current universe than the one from which the sample was drawn because, in our judgment, factors which influence employment of controllers in their career field and their retirement eligibility upon entering training remained relatively constant from January 1 to June 30, 1977.

APPENDIX I

Item (note a)	Region			
	Southern	Eastern	Western	Total
A. Number of controllers in sample	83	69	90	242
B. Number of controllers in item A completing training	20	20	27	67
C. Number of controllers in B (above) in training-related employment	5	6	4	15
D. Percent of controllers completing training who are in training-related employment (C divided by B)	25.0	30.0	14.8	22.3
E. Number of controllers who completed training	106	55	90	251
F. Projected training-related employment for controllers who have completed training (D times E)	27	16	13	56
G. Number of controllers entering program	502	228	228	958
H. Number of controllers in training	162	106	81	349
I. Number of controllers who completed or withdrew from training (G minus H)	340	122	147	609
J. Percent of controllers who completed training (E divided by I)	31.1	45.0	60.7	41.2
K. Projected number of controllers in training who can be expected to complete training (J times H)	50	47	49	146
L. Projected number of controllers in training who can be expected to complete training and obtain training-related employment (D times K)	13	14	7	34
M. Projected number of controllers who have completed, or are expected to complete, training and obtain training-related employment (F plus L)	40	30	20	90

a/ Items A through D are based on information found in our sample of cases within the three regions. Items E through M are a projection of the universe of controllers in each of the three regions that can be expected to complete training and obtain training-related employment.

We estimate that, if controllers in training at June 30, 1977, follow the same pattern in completing training and in finding employment as those in our sample, 90 from the universe of 958 who had entered the Second Career Program in the three regions will be employed in their second-career field.

RETIREMENT ELIGIBLES

The sample results and their projection to the universe of those entering training in the Southern or Eastern Region by June 30, 1977, 1/ follow.

Number of controllers in sample	152
Number of controllers in sample eligible for early or optional retirement	38
Percentage, weighted by region	22
Number of controllers entering training	730
Projected number of controllers eligible for early or optional retirement	164

1/ See footnote, p. 15.

CONTROLLERS PARTICIPATING IN SECOND CAREER PROGRAM

BY FAA REGION THROUGH JUNE 30, 1977

	Eligible for program	Declined to enter program	Entered program	In training	Withdrew from program	Completed training
Southern	768	266	502	162	234	106
Eastern	242	14	228	106	67	55
Western	313	85	228	81	57	90
Alaskan	15	9	6	2	3	1
Pacific	24	6	18	4	5	9
New England	74	1	73	33	17	23
Northwest	93	8	85	48	10	27
Central	154	28	126	55	27	44
Rocky Mountain	163	16	147	71	22	54
Great Lakes	320	163	157	56	59	42
Southwestern	414	86	328	132	93	103
Total	2,580	682	1,898	750	594	554

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF OTHER FEDERAL PROGRAMS AVAILABLE TO CONTROLLERS

OPTIONAL RETIREMENT

A Federal employee separated from service with 30 years' service at age 55, 20 years' service at age 60, or 5 years' service at age 62 is entitled to a CSC retirement annuity. The annuity is based on a combination of years of service and the highest average pay earned for three consecutive years.

EARLY RETIREMENT

Public Law 92-297, which authorized the Second Career Program, also made controllers eligible for CSC retirement benefits earlier than generally available to other Federal employees.

Controllers eligible for early retirement had to complete 20 years of air traffic control service and attain age 50 or complete 25 years of air traffic control service regardless of age. Annuities under early retirement are computed the same as for optional retirements, but controllers are assured of at least 50 percent of their average pay.

FEDERAL WORKERS' DISABILITY COMPENSATION

Federal employees disabled as a result of Federal employment are eligible for workers' disability compensation from the Department of Labor's Office of Workers' Compensation Programs. Recipients without dependents are compensated at the rate of 66-2/3 percent of their former salary including any premium pay, such as night, holiday, and Sunday differentials. The rate of compensation is increased to 75 percent for those with dependents. This compensation is exempt from Federal income taxes and, depending on a person's tax bracket, it may equal or exceed the recipient's former after-tax income. OWCP also provides for rehabilitative treatment to recipients having potential for reentering employment and provides up to 48 months of training for work that the person is capable of performing. When reemployed, compensation is reduced by the amount earned.

DISABILITY RETIREMENT

Federal employees with at least 5 years' service are eligible for CSC disability retirement annuities when their disability prevents them from performing their duties. The cause of the disability does not have to be job related. The minimum annuity is equal to 40 percent of the employee's highest average salary for any 3 consecutive years. Annuities are higher than 40 percent when the employee's length of service exceeds 22 years.

To supplement this income, annuitants are allowed to obtain employment outside the Federal Government. The annuity continues so long as the annuitant is unable to perform the duties held at the time of disability or earnings do not exceed 80 percent of the annuitant's former Federal salary during 2 consecutive years. Unlike Federal workers' disability compensation, disability retirement does not provide rehabilitative treatment or vocational training.

APPENDIX IV

ASSISTANT SECRETARY
FOR ADMINISTRATION

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20590

June 14, 1978

Mr. Henry Eschwege
Director
Community and Economic
Development Division
General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Eschwege:

In response to your letter of April 6, 1978, this is the Department of Transportation's reply to the General Accounting Office (GAO) draft report "Federal Aviation Administration's Second Career Training for Air Traffic Controllers Should Be Discontinued."

GAO believes that the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) could improve its administration of the Second Career Program, but such improvements are unlikely to noticeably increase the program's success. GAO recommends that (1) Congress discontinue the program, and (2) concurrrent with discontinuance the Secretary direct the Administrator to reassign disqualified controllers to other duties within FAA or assist them in obtaining other appropriate employment, rehabilitation, or retirement according to their individual needs.

The FAA as an operating organization charged with aviation safety has found the Second Career Program to be a particularly difficult one to administer. Even though it has served a number of beneficial purposes, our experience with the program generally agrees with the findings of the GAO report. While we might criticize some of the statistics or elements of the conclusions which were reached, that would be counter-productive. Basically, we agree with the GAO criticisms of the administration of the Second Career Program and the finding that few controllers have used the program to enter second careers related to training they received.

If we can assist you further, please let us know.

Sincerely,

Robert L. Fairman
for Edward W. Scott, Jr.

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William T. Coleman, Jr.	Mar. 1975	Jan. 1977
John T. Barnum (acting)	Feb. 1975	Mar. 1975
Claude S. Brinegar	Feb. 1973	Feb. 1975
John S. Volpe	Jan. 1969	Feb. 1973
FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION		
ADMINISTRATOR:		
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Quentin S. Taylor (acting)	Mar. 1977	May 1977
John L. McLucas	Nov. 1975	Mar. 1977
James E. Dow (acting)	Apr. 1975	Nov. 1975
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